



Republic of Namibia

STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ON OCCASION OF THE

MASTERCLASS ON EFFECTIVE CITY DESIGN IN NAMIBIA – THEORY AND PRACTICE

POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA, WINDHOEK

14 August 2015

- **Director of proceedings;**
- **Your Excellency Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Professor Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia;**
- **Professor Fabio Todeschini, Emeritus Professor of the University of Cape Town;**
- **Our esteemed Professionals in urban design and architecture;**
- **Local Authority Professionals and officials;**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

First and foremost, I would like to extend my profound gratitude to our First Lady Madam Geingos for extending this invitation to me to deliver a keynote address at this auspicious event. Secondly, I would like to thank all the stakeholders who partnered in convening this important gathering.

Indeed, this forum is of cardinal importance, as it takes place when our country is experiencing eminent migration from rural areas to the urban areas, which we term as urbanization, due to various push and pull factors. All in all, most of these factors emanate from the historical background of the apartheid system. We are all gathered here as Politicians, Academicians, Professionals and other stakeholders to share ideas and experiences regarding our subject topic, in our quest to redress the legacies of apartheid city planning and create a new Namibia as far as urban planning and design is concerned.

Director of Proceedings;

Madam First Lady;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a well-known fact that our country has inherited various challenges which resulted from the apartheid system which favoured few minority people. The apartheid system was designed to ensure segregation in areas of settlement based on race, colour and tribe, as well as the Bantu education system to disadvantage the majority. The colonial regime also ensured that blacks were prohibited from settling in urban areas through influx control laws and policies. After independence the people have gained the freedom to move to, and settle in any place in Namibia and in the last 25 years rural-urban migration have increased considerably in Namibia. Urbanisation has taken place rapidly such that it has burdened the local authority system and informal settlements have sprung up in almost all the towns across the country. However, these urban areas and systems were not designed to accommodate the rapid influx of the people from rural areas hence increasing the burden on municipalities and town councils as far as service provision is concerned. Land supply and housing system have been crowded such that people started building their own shacks. This undesirable situation has led to a huge backlog in the provision of urban serviced land and housing, of which the backlog is estimated to be over 100 000.

After 25 years of independence, Namibians are raising questions on policies and practices regarding fundamental issues affecting the daily lives of the citizens. One of the policies is the rural-urban migration and the tension created by the migration process. Human migration has negative impact on resources, both in physical and socio-economic perspective. According to the 2011 Census, urbanisation in Namibia has slowed down after 25 years countrywide to a rate of 4% per annum. This can be attributed to deliberate efforts made by the government to decentralise services closer to the people and other programmes and projects aimed at developing the rural areas. The other problem is that there has to be a change in the mind set of our people. They must be willing to live together; especially the rich people must change their minds to accommodate the poor people. They must not run to the mountains when others build next to them claiming that their property will lose value if they live with the poor. This is the

cause of inequality as service provision in most cases suburbs provided to the rich and the poor always come second.

The balance between the towns and rural area is good for internal peace and stability and less stress on urban centres to cope with migration. Therefore policies need to be holistic and seen as a part of the overall solution to matters such as rural-urban migration.

Dear Compatriots;

Several interventions have been made to address the situation. Among others:

The Government through the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development has put measures in place to address rural-urban migration problem in Namibia. The Decentralisation Act provides for the delegation of power to Regional Councils and Local Authorities. The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development is phasing out the old legislations and replacing them with the new law called the Urban and Regional Planning Bill which will be passed in parliament this year. The Bill provides an opportunity to change the existing apartheid spatial and urban form of our towns and villages and it seeks to establish urban areas to promote health, safety, order, and amenity, and convenience, environmental and economic sustainability. The Bill also addresses problems faced by the long cumbersome town planning process by giving powers to local authorities with in-house capacity to plan areas of their jurisdiction while the Ministry is to assist local authorities with limited skills capacity.

This means subnational governments will play a major role in the management of rural-urban migration and the associated needs of both rural and urban areas. Stronger regional and local economics limit the trend of urban-rural migration.

In addition there are amendments being made to the Regional Council Act, 1992 and Local Authority Act, 1992 to harmonise the legal framework in the Housing Sector.

Finally, there is a need for a mind shift from all of us to accept to live together in harmony. There is also a need to ensure that educational planning is integrated

into urban design without segregation, for a bright future of generations to come. We must work hard towards improving the living conditions of our people in rural and urban areas by adopting a jointly developed Declaration and Action Plan, which would help them to achieve well-coordinated urban development and manage the challenges of rapid urbanisation in a sustainable manner.

With these remarks I thank you.